

## Special Operation Promotes Safety

In 2006, a Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration study found that crashes involving large trucks accounted for 12 percent of all fatal crashes. The study also found that actions or inactions by both large truck and automobile drivers were responsible for 88 percent of the critical reasons for the crashes. In multi-vehicle crashes between large trucks and cars, the car driver was assigned the critical reason for the crash 56 percent of the time.

In an effort to improve the behavior and performance of both commercial and non-commercial drivers, safety inspectors and enforcement officers from MDT's Motor Carrier Services Division and Montana Highway Patrol (MHP) officers participated in Operation Safe Driver for two days in October.

During the operation, the team contacted 79 commercial and non-commercial drivers resulting in 26 cita-

tions and 35 warnings for traffic violations plus 11 seat-belt citations. Commercial vehicle inspections yielded 41 citations and 17 out-of-service citations.\* In addition, the team handed out 175 educational pamphlets.

The contacts made during this operation are expected to influence the behavior and actions of many different drivers on Montana's highways. Most of the commercial vehicle drivers expressed their appreciation for Operation Safe Driver and the fact that MDT and MHP targeted noncommercial as well as commercial drivers.

*\*Out-of-service orders are issued when a commercial vehicle fails to meet minimum safety requirements, for example, inoperable brakes or flat or worn tires. Drivers can also be cited for violations such as not having the correct endorsement on their driver's license or driving longer than allowed by law. The out-of-service vehicle may not operate until the issues have been addressed.*



*This truck was ordered out of service because of the tire problems seen above. It was not allowed to leave until the tire was replaced.*



*This picture shows that the bolts holding the fifth wheel to the truck frame are loose. The truck was declared out of service until the bolts were tightened.*



## Winter Calls on Montana



As winter weather settles over Montana, motorists are encouraged to check the MDT Road Report before they travel. By simply dialing 511 or going online to [www.mdt511.com](http://www.mdt511.com), motorists can learn about road conditions for a region or a specific route.

MDT's road report covers much of the 24,500 lane miles MDT maintains, relaying timely information on travel advisories, driving conditions, weather forecasts, road construction, road closures, and major delays. Winter travel information is updated every 30 minutes or as major changes occur.

Real-time roadway and pass conditions are also available on the 511 Web site from MDT's 27 Web cameras. Although the primary purpose of the cameras is to aid maintenance crews, MDT also makes them available to the public

for viewing road conditions. During severe winter weather, the cameras are often the most visited pages on MDT's Web site.

Motorists should be mindful that conditions can change quickly from the time they access the road information to the time they make the trip. Motorists are also encouraged to follow these important winter driving tips:

- Conduct a pre-trip vehicle inspection to ensure the vehicle is operating properly. Fluid levels, wipers, belts, hoses, headlights, brake lights, and tires should all be in good condition.
- Keep the vehicle's windows, mirrors, and lights clear of snow and ice.
- Drive with headlights on.
- Do not use cruise control on wet, icy, or snow-covered roads.

- Drive an appropriate speed for conditions. Driving too fast for conditions is often a contributing factor in crashes.
- Be aware of potentially icy areas such as shady spots and bridges.
- When approaching a snowplow from the rear, reduce speed immediately. Snowplows must operate at slower speeds to properly plow and sand. Be patient and don't crowd the plow. The plow operators know the road well and will pull over as soon as there is a spot for vehicles to safely pass. When approaching an oncoming plow, don't crowd the center line.

For more information on winter driving and winter survival tips, go to [http://www.mdt.mt.gov/publications/docs/brochures/winter\\_maint/winter\\_survival.pdf](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/publications/docs/brochures/winter_maint/winter_survival.pdf).



*Pictured from left at the official opening of the South Helena Interchange on November 20 are Kevin McLaurey of the Federal Highway Administration, Jefferson County Commissioner Tom Lythgoe, Robert Peccia representing Padbury Ranch and Nob Hill Development, Senator Max Baucus, Governor Brian Schweitzer, Jag the dog, MDT Project Manager Jack Carlson, MDT Director Jim Lynch, Mayor Jim Smith, and Lewis and Clark County Commissioner Ed Tinsley.*

## South Helena Interchange Officially Opens

The new South Helena Interchange was officially opened November 20. It is the first step in meeting the improvements recommended by the *Interstate 15 Corridor Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision* and approved by the Federal Highway Administration in January 2004.

The project is a hallmark example of how cooperative efforts between state, local, and private entities can result in accelerated project design and delivery. A \$10 million congressional earmark secured by Senator Baucus for the I-15 corridor was vital in completing the funding for this project.

The new interchange will provide improved access to Helena's Medical Park area and the redesigned entrance to St. Peter's Hospital. Additionally, the new interchange will provide relief to the congestion at the existing Capitol Interchange.



*The Dietz Port of Entry, located in Wyoming on Interstate 90 near the Montana border, began joint operations with Montana in October. Montana and Wyoming developed the facility to reduce operating costs, increase efficiencies, eliminate older unsafe weigh stations, and expedite truck movements.*

## Roving Unit to Patrol High-Crash Corridors

Starting in early January, the Montana Highway Patrol (MHP) will activate a six-person roving unit to patrol high-crash corridor areas.

The unit, which includes one MHP sergeant and five troopers, is funded by a two-year grant from MDT. The grant, for slightly less than \$1 million, covers salaries, per diem, and lodging for the officers.

The goal of the roving patrol is to reduce the number and severity of crashes in areas that MDT and the MHP have designated as high-crash corridors. High-crash corridors have a history of high fatality rates and crashes involving higher than average impaired driving, non-seatbelt usage, and speed violations. The designation is subject to change as MDT updates its data. The table below lists current high-crash corridors.

Roving patrols can be deployed to any one of these areas at any given time with the objective of stopping crashes before they happen. Occasionally, a major event may take place in an area that is not in a high-crash corridor; in which case, the roving patrol can be scheduled into that area for the duration of the event. Examples include the Bucking Horse Sale in Miles City and Saint Patrick's Day in Butte.

This is proactive traffic enforcement—a few more troopers on the road at the right times and in the right areas can make a difference.

The unit's first assignment will be in the Kalispell area.

### FFY 2007 MDT/MHP-Identified High-Crash Corridors

Roadway	Town (from-to)	Mile marker (from-to)
Highway 93	Hamilton–Missoula–Whitefish	50–90; 0–125
Secondary Hwy 269	Hamilton–Stevensville	0–20
Secondary Hwy 203	Stevensville–Florence	0–12
Highway 2	Kalispell–West Glacier	121–153
Interstate 90	9-Mile Interchange–Clinton	82.6–120
Interstate 90	Manhattan–Bozeman Pass/Hill	289–321
Highway 191	Big Sky–Four Corners	48–82
Highway 85	Four Corners–Belgrade	0–6.6
Interstate 90	Laurel–Pinehill Interchange	434–457
Highway 212	Rockvale–Laurel	42–54
Interstate 90	West of Butte–Whitehall	229–249
Interstate 15	Buxton Interchange–Woodville	116–134
Interstate 15	Boulder–Lincoln Rd	165–200
Secondary Hwy 430	Helena–Secondary Hwy 284 Intersection	0–9.2
Secondary Hwy 231	Custer Ave–Lincoln Road	0–6
Highway 78	Red Lodge–Absarokee	0–37



# Blackfeet Nation Dedicates Medicine Wheel

A hillside in Browning is the site of a community outreach project to reduce crash deaths and injuries on the Blackfeet Reservation. MDT is partnering with Blackfeet Community College to construct a Medicine Wheel that will serve as a community focus for teaching, healing, and behavior change.

"The Indian people are very good at grieving," one mother said. "We come together in our grief. But we need to come together for something that stops this grief."

The Blackfeet Tribal Business Council approved the project in April. On July 12, 2007, the site for a fifty-foot diameter rock circle was dedicated. MDT Director Jim Lynch spoke at the dedication. "We will do all we can to help you," he told the people gathered for the ceremony.

Blackfeet Community College donated the land and has provided plans for construction and improvements at the location. The Medicine Wheel will be a project for the entire Browning community including student volunteers. The rock circle will be on the side of the hill, so it is visible to the community and travelers on the highway. Fundraising for the project is now underway.

The term "Medicine Wheel" also refers to a spiritual symbol known as the Sacred Hoop or the Circle of Life. The lessons from the Medicine Wheel will support the MDT Native American impaired driving campaign theme, "Sober Behind the Wheel." This theme is currently in use on three reservations in Montana.

Three years ago, MDT began funding a pilot program for Native American Traffic Safety on the Blackfeet, Fort Belknap, and Fort Peck Reservations. In 2006, the program was given the name Safe On All Roads, or SOAR. The program strategy is based on partnerships with local organizations and a local resident who coordinates the program activities.

The Blackfeet coordinator, Cheryl Little Dog, an East Glacier resident, has developed a community network of families who have lost loved ones in alcohol-related crashes. These families have shown that they are looking for a way to remember, recover, and prevent needless deaths.



*The Medicine Wheel, a rock circle 50-feet in diameter, is part of a community effort to reduce deaths and injuries from traffic crashes.*



*MDT Director Jim Lynch speaks at the dedication ceremony on July 12. MDT is partnering with Blackfeet Community College to construct the Medicine Wheel.*

## MDT Is Looking for Research Ideas

In support of its mission to serve the public by providing a safe, cost-effective transportation system, MDT sponsors a variety of research efforts. The goal of this research is to evaluate and advance new technologies, materials, and methods; develop design and analysis techniques; and study current transportation challenges.

The MDT Research Section is always on the lookout for new research ideas. Topics can be submitted at any time and by anyone; however, they are only considered once a year and are due by December 31.

At its February meeting, the MDT Research Review Committee decides which topics it will send to technical panels. The technical panels then determine if a research need exists and the most effective and efficient manner in which to conduct the research.

All research ideas must have a champion and a sponsor before the Research Review Committee will consider them. A champion can be any MDT staff member who is willing to chair the technical panel and shepherd the project from inception to implementation. A sponsor is an MDT division administrator who is willing to take the responsibility for implementing the research results.

For information on past and current research projects, go to [http://www.mdt.mt.gov/research/projects/sub\\_listing.shtml](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/research/projects/sub_listing.shtml).

Further information and problem statement forms are available at <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/research/unique/solicit.shtml>, or contact Sue Sillick at 444-7693, or [ssillick@mt.gov](mailto:ssillick@mt.gov).



*Gallatin Gateway schoolchildren gather on October 3 to promote healthy lifestyles by walking and bicycling to school. (Photo provided by Gallatin Gateway Elementary School.)*

## 34 Montana Schools Join Walk to School Day Activities

Wednesday, October 3, was International Walk to School Day. Nationally, children from 2,730 schools representing all 50 states participated in activities designed to encourage children to walk and bicycle to school. In Montana, 34 schools registered their Walk to School Day activities on the International Walk to School Web site, [www.walktoschool.org](http://www.walktoschool.org).

The Montana schools took part in a variety of Walk to School Day activities that included “walking school buses,” “bike trains,” and incorporating walking into the reading curriculum. Some schools gave prizes and incentives for participants including a healthy breakfast or treats. In Helena, Governor Brian Schweitzer walked with children from Broadwater Elementary School.

The Montana Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program provided stickers, reflectors, pencils, and Safe Routes to School information to registered schools. To promote this year’s Walk to School Day, SRTS partnered with the Children’s Health Insurance Program to distribute over 33,000 postcards promoting Walk to School Day to children and parents from 107 schools across the state.

The goals of Walk to School Day are to create safer routes for walking and bicycling and to emphasize the importance of physical activity for children, pedestrian safety, reducing traffic congestion, concern for the environment, and building connections between families, schools, and the community. It was established in the United States in 1997 by the Partnership for a Walkable America.

### Motor Carrier Services Relocates

MDT’s Motor Carrier Services Division is now located at 2550 Prospect Avenue, the former home of the Rail, Transit and Planning Division. The new location is across the highway from the headquarters building, just west of Wal-Mart. MCS contact information remains the same. At this time, there is no parking available for large vehicles.

## Transit Tales

### Transit Funding Applications Due:

Applications for Transit funding are due February 1, 2008. The FY 2009 coordination plan and application booklet and the guidance booklet are available online at <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/business/grants.shtml>. If you have any questions, please contact your regional planner:

Southern Region .....Tom Stuber.....444-9216  
Northern Region.....Steven Potuzak.....444-4265  
Western Region.....David Jacobs.....444-9192

### Transit Section Hosts Fall Training Workshop:

The MDT Transit Section hosted its annual Fall Training Workshop in the MDT Auditorium on November 8 and 9. The training covered a variety of topics including customer service, Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requirements, compliance reviews, applying for funds, and maintenance records.

Nearly 50 participants from over 30 agencies serving the general public and the elderly and disabled attended. An additional 20 participants joined in from remote sites in Glendive, Havre, and Missoula.

Nationally known transit consultant Peter Schauer led discussions on how people think and relate to their environment and how transit providers can determine if their organization is customer driven.

The ever-changing realm of federal requirements was also presented in detail with discussions on the full range of FTA and civil rights requirements. Participants were also presented with information that will aid them in periodic compliance reviews.

## CTEP Spotlight

### CTEP Completes 2007 Workshops:

CTEP recently completed its 2007 workshops in Sidney and Miles City. CTEP was the main topic, but participants also learned about MDT’s Safe Routes to School Program.

The tentative locations for the 2008 workshops tour are the Hi-Line and Billings areas. CTEP staff is always willing and available to take individual sessions to any local government that would like more information.

### CTEP Manuals Distributed:

The new CTEP manuals were distributed in early October. This year, a CD in PDF format was included with the files. The manual and CTEP forms are on the Web at <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/business/ctep/>.

For information on the 2008 workshops or a hard copy of the CTEP manual, please contact Joan Scott at 444-1283 or [joscott@mt.gov](mailto:joscott@mt.gov).



# Billings Students Study Archaeology at MDT Dig



*Archaeologist Steve Aaberg discusses excavation procedure with Alkali Creek Elementary students at the Swords Park-Alkali Creek site near Billings.*



*An Alkali Creek Elementary student prepares to throw the atlatl, an ancient tool that enables a spear to fly with greater velocity than if it was thrown by arm power alone.*

Anytime MDT employees have an opportunity to share their interesting projects with schools and communities, they do so. That was the case in Billings this fall when MDT archaeologist Steve Platt put on archaeological education programs for Alkali Creek Elementary and Bench Elementary Schools in Billings.

Students from both schools gained first-hand archaeology experience and learned about the former inhabitants of their neighborhood as they explored an MDT archaeological excavation in Billings. Students first learned about archaeology in the classroom and then traveled to the excavation site. Platt demonstrated flint knapping, a process of carving stone into tools, then the children walked through the site to discover clues to the past.

MSU's Project Archaeology, a national program to encourage archaeological and heritage education, assisted with the project. Coordinator Crystal Alegria worked with the schools to formulate learning objectives and plan activities for the students.

MDT undertook the archaeological excavation of the Swords Park-Alkali Creek site to gather significant data prior to construction of the Airport Road project as required by the National Historic Preservation Act.

As a practice, MDT strives to avoid impacting significant cultural resources, but in the case of this intersection, impacts cannot be avoided. Data obtained prior to construction will be compiled in a publicly available report, and artifacts will be curated in Helena or Billings.

The site was identified in 2005. Small-scale test excavations showed the site to contain significant scientific information about Montana's prehistory. The archaeological data consists of fragments of bison, deer, and antelope bone, stone tools, and campfires used by the site's pre-contact inhabitants.

It is likely that the Swords Park-Alkali Creek site is associated with the nearby Billings Bison Trap located near Metra Park and that the people who trapped bison there used the Swords Park-Alkali Creek site as their base camp.

MDT hopes that providing students with hands-on experience in archaeology will spark a life long interest in science, history, and archaeology.

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## **Pictograph Caves** continued from page 7

sibility of the State Parks Commission in 1949 (the commission was part of the highway commission). The city turned the site over to the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks in 1969, which now manages it as Pictograph Cave State Park.

MDT's first foray into cultural resource management between 1937 and 1949 was as an administrator concerned about the tourism potential of the site and the scientific value of the artifacts recovered from the caves. Other than the museum, however, its promotion as a tourist attraction was minimal. There was no mention of the site in the promotional literature distributed by the department in the late 1930s and early 1940s. The 1938 publication *Picture Writing* refers in passing to Pictograph Caves, but there is no real mention of the site in the pamphlet. Eventually, the site's educational potential was downplayed by the highway commission and, instead, it concentrated

on the ownership of the artifacts. Evidence in Bob Fletcher's correspondence regarding the caves indicates that much of his and Lee Ford's interest in the artifacts was because of their pursuit of relics for their own collections.

Despite the controversy over the disposition of the artifacts taken from the cave, MDT played an important role in the development of archaeology in the state during the Great Depression. Although developed as a tourist attraction, the department was clearly interested in the scientific value of the artifacts. Some 70 years later, MDT continues to be an important advocate of many of the state's outstanding and significant archaeological sites, including one north of Helmville in Powell County, a buffalo kill and processing site on Alkali Creek in Billings, and the second Crow Agency site south of Absarokee in Stillwater County.

# Pavement Preservation Works for Montana

Montana's transportation system is an asset worth preserving. Toward that end, MDT has adopted a pavement preservation policy that allows it to extend the useful life of pavements in a cost-effective manner. Pavement preservation includes crack filling, chip seals, and thin pavement overlays.

MDT's pavement preservation efforts are an important element of an overall asset-management process called the Performance Programming Process, or P<sup>3</sup>. Through P<sup>3</sup>, MDT ensures that Montana's road systems meet or exceed performance goals for bridge health, traffic congestion, and pavement condition.

MDT's previous policy was to fix roads on a "worst-first" basis, or to focus on the most seriously and obviously deteriorated roads first. This approach led to the gradual deterioration of the road system and the accumulation of overdue or postponed road rehabilitation and reconstruction. Roads in such bad condition were poor candidates for pavement preservation, and any repairs were short-term fixes that were not cost effective. The only option was rehabilitation or reconstruction, but rebuilding roads comes with high costs and driver inconvenience.

In 1997, the Pavement Management Section prepared a model of the entire Interstate System to compare a "worst-first" strategy against a pavement preservation strategy. The result was dramatic. The study showed that by applying the "right treatment to the right pavement," it was possible to get 28 to 30 years out of a pavement that was designed for 20 years. Using the worst-first policy, roads designed for 20 years were in rehabilitation in 16 to 18 years. The result of this study was the beginning of dedicated funding for pavement preservation at MDT.

MDT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) worked as a team to bring this cost-effective change to Montana's transportation system. In 2001, criteria for preventative maintenance were defined in *Guidelines for Nomination and Developments of Pavement Projects*. The criteria ensured that safety, geometrics, and environmental standards were not ignored. Once these criteria were met, FHWA allowed federal funds to be spent on pavement preservation. The Transportation Commission supported and approved the plan.

Today, the evidence shows that pavement preservation works, and there are hard facts and data to reflect this: In 2000, 64 percent of our Interstates were classified in good condition. By 2007, 91 percent were classified in good condition. In those same years, the percentage of Interstates in fair condition dropped from 29 percent to 7 percent. Those in poor condition dropped from 7 percent to 2 percent. These trends continue across all state roadway systems. In the last few years, trends are starting to plateau, but this is because pavements are in near-optimal condition and because of budget constraints due to inflation.

The pavement preservation program has been a team effort within MDT. The Engineering, Maintenance, and Rail, Transit and Planning Divisions and MDT District offices are all involved in the process.

MDT's success in meeting its performance goals serves as a model for others to follow. In fact, Montana has become a leader in pavement preservation. Mark Zitzka of FHWA describes MDT's preservation system as being "light years ahead of other states' programs." Our pavement preservation system

has been such a success that we are beginning to share our guidelines with other states. It is yet another way MDT is raising the bar on highway quality.

## Asset Management Pays Off!

Montana's pavements are superior when compared to pavements in adjacent states:

- No raveling (separating of pavement layers) found in new construction test sections in Montana compared to 30 percent in adjacent states.
- Transverse cracking (cracks that go across the road) averaged 479 feet per mile in Montana versus 2,026 feet per mile in adjacent states.
- Montana pavement ruts averaged .29 inch deep compared to .50 inch deep in adjacent states.
- No Montana semi-rigid pavement (asphalt) had fatigue cracking versus 55 percent of test sections in adjacent states.

*This information is from "Mechanistic-Empirical Pavement Design Guide Flexible Pavement Performance Prediction Models for Montana" FHWA/MT-07-008/8158-1, Final Report by Harold Von Quintos and James Moulthrop.*

## Draft TranPlan 21 Amendment Ready for Review

MDT is asking its customers, the citizens of Montana, to review and comment on the draft amendment to *TranPlan 21*, Montana's statewide multimodal transportation policy plan. The purpose of this limited amendment is to ensure the plan complies with the most recent changes in federal laws and regulations. These changes include the following:

- Consideration of transportation system security.
- Additional use of visualization techniques in public involvement activities.
- Integration of the Montana Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan.
- Consistency with growth and economic development plans.
- New consultation requirements.
- Statewide plans/environmental mitigation activities.
- Incorporation of capital, operations and management strategies, investments, procedures, and other measures.

The draft amendment is available for review and comment through December 31, 2007. There are several ways to request or review a copy of the draft plan:

- Visit MDT's Web site at [http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/tranplan21\\_amend/](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/tranplan21_amend/).
- Call toll free (800)714-7296.
- Send an e-mail request to [mdt\\_tp21\\_2007@mt.gov](mailto:mdt_tp21_2007@mt.gov).
- Visit your local library.

For more information about *TranPlan 21*, please contact Carol Strizich at 444-9240 or [cstrizich@mt.gov](mailto:cstrizich@mt.gov).

## A Meritorious Undertaking:

# MDT and the Pictograph Caves

by Jon Axline, MDT Historian

For millions of years, water and wind erosion carved three caves out of the face of sandstone rimrocks about six miles southeast of Billings on Empty Gulch. The caves provided shelter to Native Americans beginning about 4,500 years ago with pictographs on the walls of one cave showing use of the site up until the late 19th century. Discovered by amateur archaeologists in June 1937, and known originally as the “Indian Caves,” they became the subject of intensive archaeological investigations beginning later that year by Montana School of Mines anthropology professor Mel Sayre and a crew of professional and amateur archaeologists. Given the evocative names of Pictograph, Middle, and Ghost, the three caves quickly became a local attraction drawing picnickers from Billings and the surrounding area. It was not long before Sayre and the Billings Commercial Club began looking for ways to attract visitors to them from all over the United States.

In early September 1937, Sayre approached MDT Plans Engineer Bob Fletcher and Chief Engineer Don McKinnon about asking the Highway Commission to purchase the caves site and partially sponsor archaeological excavations there. Fletcher, who was always looking for new ways to draw tourists to the Treasure State, was well aware of the scientific importance of the Indian Caves. Fletcher and McKinnon presented Sayre’s proposal to the highway commissioners at their September meeting. Commission members Lee Ford, an avid collector of prehistoric artifacts, and John Wheeler of Billings supported the proposal. Fletcher and McKinnon believed that the site’s proximity to newly completed U.S. Highway 87 might deflect criticism from what Fletcher termed a “not-too-prehistoric-site-minded public.” In his letter to the highway commission, Sayre proposed to “make this spot a roadside campsite and beautification and education project.”

The Commission eagerly accepted Sayre’s proposal and purchased the 20-acre property in February 1938. Further, it stipulated that a building be constructed on-site to “display and exhibit the artifacts which are being excavated and the said artifacts shall be kept there and not removed to some other place.” MDT would not build the museum, but provided plans for it based on the design of its roadside museum in Laurel. Like the

Laurel museum, it included dioramas, photographs, maps, and artifacts excavated from the site. The archaeological dig and the museum were true multi-agency projects. The Works Progress

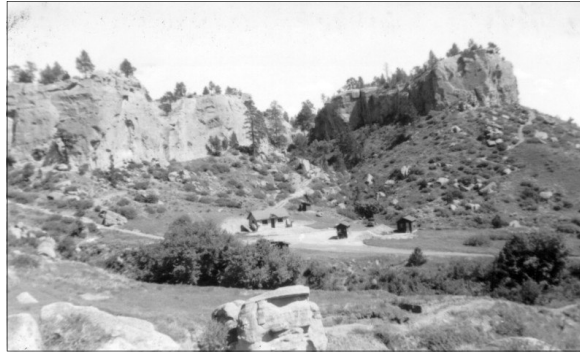
Administration (WPA) spent \$525 to build the museum, while the Billings Commercial Club formed the Indian Caves Development Committee (ICDC) to manage the site. The Eastern Montana Normal School (now MSU-Billings) provided storage and laboratory space and, along with MDT and WPA, co-sponsored the excavation work. MDT provided equipment for surveying the site along with a surveyor named Walter Vannaman, who participated in the excavation and occasionally provided tours to visitors. The department also landscaped U.S. 87 in the vicinity of the caves and erected a roadside historical marker. The marker described the caves as providing “air-conditioned housing for some of Montana’s early families even before Pharaoh’s daughter found Moses adrift on the Nile, as long ago as 2500 B.C.” Between 1938 and 1941, an estimated 10,000 people visited the Indian Caves.

Projects often don’t go as planned, and the excavation of the caves was no different. As the role of the highway commission, ICDC, Eastern Montana Normal School, and WPA in the management of the site increased, the project’s advocate, Mel Sayre, was increasingly iced out of the decision-making process. In retaliation, he took the artifacts collected from the caves to Lewistown where he established a laboratory to process them. The removal was a breach of the original agreement be-

tween the WPA and the highway commissioners, who insisted that the artifacts remain in Billings where they would be stored and exhibited at the on-site museum. For three years, the highway commission and Sayre tilted over ownership of the artifacts. There is no evidence that the problem was ever resolved by the time the MDT-sponsored excavations at the caves ceased in 1941.

The Montana Highway Department retained ownership of Pictograph Caves until 1963 when it turned them over to the city of Billings. Prior to that, however, and despite steady visitation numbers, the department had little to do with the management of the site. Vandals burned the museum to the ground in 1945, and the administration of the property became the respon-

... continued on page 5



*An early photo shows the Pictograph Cave site, located about six miles southeast of Billings. Originally known as the Indian Caves, the site was discovered in June 1937.*



*The caves quickly became a popular local attraction drawing picnickers from Billings and the surrounding area. This photo was probably taken in 1939 or 1940.*



## MDT Wants Your Comments

To receive a list of highway projects MDT plans to present to the Transportation Commission, visit [http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/docs/trans\\_comm/proposed\\_proj.pdf](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/docs/trans_comm/proposed_proj.pdf), or give us a call at 1-800-714-7296. You can mail your comments on proposed projects to MDT at the following address or e-mail them to [mdtnewprojects@mt.gov](mailto:mdtnewprojects@mt.gov).

MDT Project Analysis Chief  
PO Box 201001  
Helena, MT 59620-1001

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## Contact Information

Only the most frequently requested numbers are listed here. For an area or person not listed, call 800-714-7296 (in Montana only) or 406-444-3423. The TTY number is 406-444-7696 or 800-335-7592.

Administrator (Sandra Straehl) .....	444-7692
.....	<a href="mailto:sstraehl@mt.gov">sstraehl@mt.gov</a>
Bicyclist/Pedestrian (Pam Langve-Davis) .....	444-9273
.....	<a href="mailto:plangvedavis@mt.gov">plangvedavis@mt.gov</a>
Highway Traffic Safety (Priscilla Sinclair) .....	444-7417
.....	<a href="mailto:psinclair@mt.gov">psinclair@mt.gov</a>
Map Orders .....	444-6119
.....	<a href="http://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/maps">http://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/maps</a>
Multimodal Planning (Dick Turner).....	444-7289
.....	<a href="mailto:dturner@mt.gov">dturner@mt.gov</a>
Projects (Gary Larson) .....	444-6110
.....	<a href="mailto:glarson@mt.gov">glarson@mt.gov</a>
Secondary Roads (Wayne Noem).....	444-6109
.....	<a href="mailto:wnoem@mt.gov">wnoem@mt.gov</a>
Road Data & Mapping (Ed Ereth).....	444-6111
.....	<a href="mailto:eereth@mt.gov">eereth@mt.gov</a>
Traffic Data (Becky Duke).....	444-6122
.....	<a href="mailto:bduke@mt.gov">bduke@mt.gov</a>
Transit (Audrey Allums) .....	444-4210
.....	<a href="mailto:aallums@mt.gov">aallums@mt.gov</a>
Statewide & Urban Planning (Lynn Zanto).....	444-3445
.....	<a href="mailto:lzanto@mt.gov">lzanto@mt.gov</a>
Newsline Editor (Dawn McCallum).....	444-6115
.....	<a href="mailto:dmccallum@mt.gov">dmccallum@mt.gov</a>

MDT attempts to provide accommodations for any known disability that may interfere with a person participating in any service, program, or activity of the Department. Alternative accessible formats of this information will be provided upon request. For further information call (406)444-3423, TTY (800)335-7592, or the Montana Relay at 711.

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2701 Prospect Avenue  
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